

**FUTURE FISHERIES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM
WINTER 2016 FUNDING CYCLE
Decision Notice and Response to Public Comment**

Prepared by
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
March 10, 2016

Proposal and Final Action

Members of the Future Fisheries Review Panel submitted funding recommendations for 14 of 17 proposed projects from the Winter 2016 funding cycle of the Future Fisheries Improvement Program (FFIP) to the Montana Fish & Wildlife Commission (Commission) for final approval. The Future Fisheries Review Panel is an independent board appointed by the governor (87-1-273, MCA). As a final action, the Commission adopted all of the funding recommendations, as submitted by the Future Fisheries Review Panel, at their public meeting held in Helena on March 10, 2016.

The FFIP was established in 1995 to establish and implement a statewide voluntary program that promotes fishery habitats and spawning areas for the rivers, streams, and lakes of Montana's fisheries in order to enhance future fisheries through natural reproduction (87-1-272, MCA).

Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA)

MEPA requires Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) to assess the potential consequences of the proposed action for the human and natural environment. Environmental Assessments (EA's) were prepared and released by FWP on January 7, 2016 for two individual proposed projects associated with the Winter 2016 Future Fisheries funding cycle. The 30-day public comment period ended February 7, 2016. These proposed projects included:

- Long Creek channel restoration
- West Fork Gallatin River stream and pond improvement

The remaining 12 projects funded by Commission approval fell either under a categorical exclusion (defined under ARM), the federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), or ongoing/pending Environmental Assessment processes by the project applicants.

Categorical exclusion:

French Creek riparian fencing

NEPA:

Little Blackfoot and Ontario Creek road relocation / floodplain restoration
North Fork Dry Cottonwood Creek culvert replacement
Sucker Creek fish passage
Telegraph Creek Lilly Orphan Boy mine reclamation
Vermillion River Miners Gulch restoration
Warm Springs fish passage

Other processes / Applicant EAs:

Big Spring Creek Machler restoration
Bostwick Creek fish barrier
Carpenter Creek fish barrier
French Gulch channel restoration
Hells Canyon instream flow

Summary of Public Comment

The following is a summary of comments received from two drafted EA's, followed by the responses from FWP.

West Fork Gallatin River stream and pond improvement (016-2016)

- "I support the FFIP project for Long Creek. It looks like a good plan to help with a self-maintaining floodplain environment, which should result in a improved and more resilient ecological condition for Arctic grayling. Between this and the water leasing, let's hope for a good recovery!!!!!"
- Reponse: Thank you for the support; we also hope for a good recovery.

Long Creek channel restoration (010-2016)

- "I support the FFIP for the West Gallatin River. The only reason I support this project is that most of the money comes from the people that benefit the most from this project. (residents of Big Sky) The \$30,000 from FFIP can be justified because of the good that will come from the project for the West Gallatin River. I would caution starting the project without the rest of the funds being secured."
- Response: Thank you for your support. We will not reimburse the applicant for the project costs until the agreements are in place and funds are secured.

Decision Notice

The public comment period closed on the above projects, and the comments indicated general support. Based on the EAs' disclosures and analyses of potential impacts, FWP concludes that the proposed actions will not result in any significant impacts. For the two projects listed above, FWP will adopt the draft EA as the final EA and proceed with the projects as planned. Copies of the final EA's are available upon request.

Thank you for your interest,



Bruce Rich
Fisheries Division Administrator
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks